Songwriting

with

Abimaro Gunnell

Recommended for young people aged 15 and above

Created by singer/songwriter Abimaro Gunnell, this activity will guide you through the basics of song writing in three parts. By the end of the activity, you'll have created your own lyrics and melody and will have the chance to experiment further.

No experience is needed and anyone can give it a go!
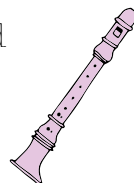
You will need:

Pen or Pencil

Paper

Scissors

An instrument (this could be your voice) or a phone, tablet, or computer

Part 1 Write your story

A good song often tells a story. It can start in one place and end somewhere very different. Why don't you try starting your song with a journey? A journey is something that we all go on, either literally, like on our way to the shops, or a journey that is more hidden, like one we might travel on in our thoughts or dreams.

So, let's begin: Using three words, we will create three sentences about a journey. You could choose any three words based on a theme like nature, or colours or dreams.

Your journey can be a noun, a verb, or an adjective. For example, I am choosing the journey of a raindrop. From this, I have picked three words: "cloud, falls, fly". I then have created three sentances using these three words.

Journey: _Raindrop_

Three Words: _Cloud Falls Fly_

Here are my three sentences:

A cloud hovers over the water

Full, it falls through the sky

Watch it move, watch it fly

Top tips!

- They don't have to rhyme.
- Keep your sentences quite short. Simple is sometimes best!

1 Now, choose a type of journey and pick your three words:

Journey: _____

Your Three words: _____

_____

2 Using your three words, add some more words to create complete sentences.

Your Three Sentences:

_____

_____

_____

These questions might give you some ideas for your three sentences:

- Is your journey quick or slow?
- What do you see on your journey?
- What different places do you travel to?
- What do you hear on your journey?

Congratulations!

You have created your lyrics!

You can move on to the next part to make your melody or repeat this part to create more verses or different themed lyrics.
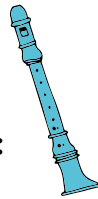
Part 2   Make your melody

It can be hard to know where to start when trying to write a melody or tune. So, we are going to introduce you to our melody dice, and a Song Maker to help get you started.

Start by assembling your melody dice (separate to this booklet) with the instructions provided. You will notice that each side has a colour and a musical note, with one 'wild side' that has a choice of 2 colours or musical notes. If the dice lands on the 'wild side', you can pick whichever colour you want.

You can now choose one of two ways to create your melody. Choose ONE of these two options:

Option 1   with an instrument:

1   Roll the dice 3 times and play your 3 notes! These are the first 3 notes of your first and third lines. Write them down here:

_____

2   Again, roll the dice 3 times and play your 3 notes. These are the first 3 notes of your second line. Write them down here:

_____

Top tip!

If you're not happy with your melody, roll again! Or make some choices yourself to change the melody to make it sound how you want it to. This is your song, you know best!
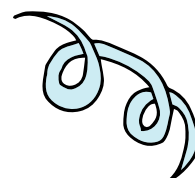
Option 2 with a phone, tablet, or computer:

1 Open the Song Maker using any phone, tablet, or computer. Follow this link:

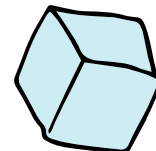musiclab.chromeexperiments.com/Song-Maker

You will see a grid on your screen. If you click on each rectangle in each row, a different note plays, with a different colour. All we need to do is match colours here with those you roll with the dice

2 Roll the dice and find and click on the same colour on the Song Maker. For example, if I roll a yellow on my dice, I will find one of the yellow rectangles on the song maker, which will play a note.
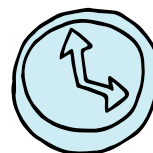
3 Roll the dice 3 more times to find 3 more notes. You should then have 4 notes, with a combination of colours. Press the play symbol on your song maker and it will play your melody back to you.

4 These 4 notes are the first 4 notes of your melody, the rest of the melody can come from your head, or if you are struggling, just roll the dice again for some more ideas or experiment with the Song Maker.
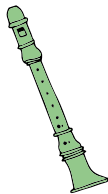
Have a go and don't worry if it takes you a few tries. Remember, this is meant to be fun, and an opportunity to experience something new, there are no wrong answers. If it gets too complicated, take 5 mins and revisit it when you feel ready.

Part 3   Put it together!

Follow the steps below to put it all together! Remember to follow the same steps of the option you chose in Part 1.

Option 1   with an Instrument:

1 Write out your three lines of lyrics created in Part 2.

_____

_____

_____

The first three notes you rolled are the first three notes of **line 1** and **line 3**. Write the notes above your lyrics.

2 Now come up with a melody for the second half of **line 1** and **line 3**. Experiment with a melody on your instrument or voice. If you are struggling, use the melody dice to help choose where to start, but remember that your choices are just as good without the dice, and you may find that the melody of the song flows better when you finish them yourself.

Need Help? Check out Abimaro's example on the last page...

3 The second set of three notes you rolled are the first three notes of **line 2**. Write the notes above your lyrics. Now come up with a melody on your own for the second half of **line 2**. Again, experiment with your instrument or voice.

You're done!

Well done, you have finished your lyrics and melody! Have a go at singing all lines together. You may need to play the melody on your instrument a few times before singing them.

Option 2   with the Song Maker

1 The 4 notes you have created are the notes for your first 4 words from the lyrics you wrote earlier. Now it's time to have a go at hearing what your words and melody sound like together! The best way to do this is to sing them to yourself. You might want to keep playing your melody on the Song Maker in the background until you can remember it. **Go for it!**

Top tip!

The Song Maker gives you a rhythm along with your melody, but you don't have to follow that. You can make long notes or short ones, just go with what you feel works best!

2 You now have the melody for the first 4 words of your lyrics, well done! Now see if you can come up with the rest of the melody for your lyrics yourself. If you are struggling, use the Song Maker and melody dice to help choose where to start, but remember that your choices are just as good without the Song Maker, and you may find that the melody of the song flows better when you finish them yourself.

3 Keep going until you are happy with how your melody sounds.

You're done!

Well done, you have finished your lyrics and melody! Have a go at singing all three lines together. You may need to play the melody on the Song Maker a few times before singing them.

Bonus activity:

Could you add a musical accompaniment to your melody?

On Song Maker you could add more notes and a beat to go with your melody and lyrics.

Find an example of what I did by scanning this QR code on your phone or tablet or by visiting:
musiclab.chromeexperiments.com/Song-Maker/song/5478031989145600

Need Help? Check out Abimaro's example:

Here are my first 3 notes for my first and last lines: **C D C**
Here are my second 3 notes for my middle line: **D D D**

On the right are the notes from the dice, with the notes from my own melody choices, and my words:

C   D   C-F   C-F   C   F-D
A cloud hovers above the water

D   D D-B   D   D   B
Full, it falls through the sky

C   D C-A   C   D C
Watch it move, watch it fly

Visit the activity Padlet to listen to the recording of my 'topline' - melody & words.

Scan this QR code on your phone or tablet or visit:
padlet.com/WigmoreHallLearning/b3s0g2191m-6c3ey4

Share your creations!

We would love to hear your song!

Record yourself singing or submit your lyrics and melody on our activity Padlet or, if you used the Song Maker, hit save and submit your unique link on the activity Padlet.

Scan the QR code on your phone or tablet
or visit: padlet.com/WigmoreHallLearning/b3s0g2191m6c3ey4

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